

## Devotional Studies No. 25

# Walking in Love

Christmas is a celebration about God's love for lost humanity. Do we love one another as God loves us? The words of John about God's love and our love for one another should ring loud and clear to all of God's people: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (**1John 4:10-11**). Christians talk about love, but, at the same time, it is difficult for many Christians to actually exhibit love in their lives, especially for the unlovable. The season of Advent, the birth of Christ, is a time in which Christians celebrate the coming of Christ into the world. One can hardly reflect upon this season without recalling the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**" <sup>17</sup> **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"** (**John 3:16-17**). It is in this vein that Paul writes to the Romans: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (**Romans 5:8**). In the coming of Jesus, God reveals His unfathomable love.

Jesus, too, demonstrated His love by laying aside His glory and, at the same time, ransomed His life for many (**Philippians 2:6-8**). Paul prefaced his remarks about Jesus' glory with words that unfold the very essence of the Christian faith, which faith is overflowing with love:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose (**2:1-2**).

In the Advent of Christ, one witnesses the incomprehensible love of God and of Christ demonstrated in their search for that which they do not need. Immediately, upon the fall of Adam and Eve, God told Satan, in the presence of Adam and Eve, about the coming Redeemer. The whole of the Old Testament concerns the coming of Christ into the world. In the coming of Christ, one witnesses the One who truly loves. In the Advent of Christ, one observes the unveiling of Divine love in all its wealth and richness. As a result of this kind of love, Paul admonishes Christians to love one another with sincerity (**Romans 12:9**). It is not uncommon for Christians to love on the surface, but inwardly they are filled with disgust and hatred and revulsion and dislike for other believers,

especailly if they are not on their social status or do not think doctrinally as they think. For this reason, Paul zeros in on love for other believers, which love grows from an appreciation of God's love toward the ungodly, the wicked, the immoral, and the blasphemous individual. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? (**Matthew 5:46**).

Paul writes to the Ephesians that they should "walk in love" [περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, peripateite en agaph] (**Ephesians 5:2**). The NIV translates this phrase as, "live a life of love." Without love the body of Christ cannot live. Love, as it were, is the circulation of the blood in the body of Christ. Love is the outer expression for the hidden life in Christ. One must guard against clothing oneself with love just as an outer garment. Love must flow from the heart, internal as well as external. Paul concludes his First Epistle to the Corinthians with the following exhortation: "Do everything in love" (**1 Corinthians 16:14**). John writes: "This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another" (**1 John 3:11**). Again, John drives home the point of love:

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. <sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. <sup>19</sup> This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence <sup>20</sup> whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. (**3:14-20**)

How do you feel about God's people? John goes right to the heart of the matter about love: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well" (**1 John 5:1**). The words of Jesus to His disciples should pierce each heart as one contemplates love: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (**John 13:34-35**). Do others know that you are a disciple of Jesus?